

# The case of the stolen elephants

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The old Supreme Court holds special memories for many old timers in the profession. Take the Solicitor General Tom Pauling QC. He recalls representing the defendants in the case of the stolen elephants. As is the human penchant for assembling weird items, a Darwin woman had collected many elephants over many years from around the world. Ivory elephants, ebony elephants, wooden elephants and even cloth elephants. During [Cyclone] Tracy the elephants vanished. The Police arrested two French men packing elephants into boxes addressed to Paris. The men, Trippier and Plongeon, became Mr Pauling's clients. The exhibits were assembled in graduating size along the bar table in the old Supreme Court.

Mr Pauling gave a sterling performance to the jury of the horrors of the cyclone, how complete devastation was assured and how the elephants were destined not to survive and that, perhaps, the 'liberation' of the elephants was akin to the act of good samaritans. Wise to the tactic, Justice Forster sought to correct the over-dramatisation of the defence and played down the devastating effect of the cyclone to Darwin but society's 12 good people had experienced Tracy's fury. They returned a not guilty verdict and gave Mr Pauling encouragement for future Oscar winning attempts.



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